

*The*



*Bulletin*

KJA Sept. 2004

KJA

1575 Annie Street  
Daly City, Ca 94015

# Happy New Year

“Le Shana Tova”

David Ovadia

**Acting Hakham:** Joe Pessah (650) 941-2115 [jpessah@ttt.com](mailto:jpessah@ttt.com)

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS:**

*President:* David Ovadia (415) 661-3643 [eovadia824@earthlink.net](mailto:eovadia824@earthlink.net)  
*Vice-President* Joe Wahed (415) 474-9724 [jaw7@ix.netcom.com](mailto:jaw7@ix.netcom.com)  
*Secretary:* Joe D. Moussa (650) 212-1434 [joe\\_moussa@yahoo.com](mailto:joe_moussa@yahoo.com)  
*Treasurer:* Elie Moussa (415) 591-6183 [emoussa400@aol.com](mailto:emoussa400@aol.com)

**BOARD MEMBERS:**

Maurice Pessah (408) 528-0928 [mpessah\\_52@hotmail.com](mailto:mpessah_52@hotmail.com)  
Joe Moussa (650) 593-9507 [jmoussa@flash.net](mailto:jmoussa@flash.net)  
Marc Khedr (650) 871-9727 [mkhedr50@aol.com](mailto:mkhedr50@aol.com)  
Emiel Kheder (415) 731-6692  
✓ Joe D. Moussa (650) 212-1434 [joe\\_moussa@yahoo.com](mailto:joe_moussa@yahoo.com)  
Abraham Massuda (408) 274-1064 [abraham\\_massuda@comcast](mailto:abraham_massuda@comcast)  
Joe Ovadia (925) 930-9985 [jovadia@attbi.com](mailto:jovadia@attbi.com)  
Debbie Ovadia (650) 966-8002 [djovadia@comcast.net](mailto:djovadia@comcast.net)  
Gina Saddik (650) 548-9248 [gsaddik@pacbell.net](mailto:gsaddik@pacbell.net)  
Sam Saddik (650) 548-9248 [ssaddik@pacbell.net](mailto:ssaddik@pacbell.net)  
Oreett Lichaa (408) 246-1738 [Swim961@earthlink.net](mailto:Swim961@earthlink.net)

**PAST PRESIDENTS:**

Maurice Pessah (94-98)  
Joe Moussa (90-94)  
Joe Abel (86-90)  
Jacob Masliah (83-86)

**PUBLIC RELATIONS & LIAISON:**

Mourad El Kodsi

**BULLETIN EDITORS:**

KJA B'nai Israel	Debbie Ovadia	Oreett Lichaa
1575 Annie Street	<a href="mailto:djovadia@comcast.net">djovadia@comcast.net</a>	<a href="mailto:swim961@earthlink.net">swim961@earthlink.net</a>
Daly City, CA 94015	Brenda Gazzar	
(650) 994-9757	<a href="mailto:bgazzar@excite.com">bgazzar@excite.com</a>	

**NOTE:**

Please address your articles or information for publishing to the Editors



## President's Message

Dear Members,

This year represents the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our temple. Yes, it has been that long and we are proud of it. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I hope the year has been a good one for each of you. We have been busy with numerous activities, simchas, and events, and I would like to raise awareness of some of these activities and individuals who led the efforts.

Since the beginning of the year, the Education Committee, which is led by Joe D. Moussa, Sam Saddik, Abe Massuda, and Joe Moussa, has been sponsoring regular sessions, on religious and spiritual topics of interest, on the first Shabbat of each month after Saturday prayers to foster the education of our members.

Thanks to the group of volunteers that worked hard on February 21 to clean the shed and several rooms and closets of the Temple to make room for a children's playground and a better place for everyone. If you have items that could help with the children's playground or would like to donate money towards that purpose, please contact Gina Saddik or send your donation directly to KJA.

We had a wonderful Purim Party with perfect weather, great food and fun at our Temple on Sunday, March 7 that was well attended by our community members. The community thanks all the members who put that event together for all their hard work, thoughtfulness and dedication.

The Board and the Education Committee would like to thank Jack Ovadia for his offer to sponsor Rabbi Hayim Levy and others, from Israel, to visit and educate our community. Jack's vision is to have the lectures recorded by audiotapes and videotapes and later transcribed in English for our members, children and for future generations. It is evident that our community and children are very interested in learning the pillars of our foundation and how to continue the Karaite tradition. This is a very large project that requires a lot of planning, funds and dedication. Please let us know what topics are of interest to the community and if other states or regions would like to have Rabbi Hayim come to their state for some lectures. I encourage everyone to take this opportunity and make the most out of it; we need all the help we can get and we have a lot of talent in the community.

We had a one-day meeting on April 25<sup>th</sup> for the Board to work on the topic of education. Jack Ovadia from Texas and Walter Marzouk from Los Angeles attended the meeting, and we thank them for their participation and their input. The major item that resulted from the meeting was the identification of the need to get an educator to lead our community in the tenets of Karaism faith and prayer. We have established a formal Search Committee, led by Gina Saddik, which will ensure that the search process is conducted in a consistent and equitable manner. Please see the description regarding the scholar/educator project in the following section. Joe Abel has been asked to serve as the community liaison and will keep you informed throughout the search process.

A Torah that had been brought out of Egypt by Joseph Ovadia (may he rest in peace) was recently moved from Providence, RI to the community in southern California. It is currently residing in a special location in the home of Alan and Feryal Ovadia, where the community often holds prayer services. Joseph Ovadia was my uncle, and the Torah belongs to the entire Ovadia Family. It is truly a beautiful gift that this Torah will be cherished and utilized by a number of KJA members, including the children, grandchildren, and other relatives of Joseph Ovadia.

I would like to thank Rami Mangoubi for stepping up to the Board's request to put together the article in this Bulletin and to pursue its publication in a journal with a wider circulation. This article is an attempt to respond to some of the unfavorable publicity that we sometimes see about Karaites.

Thanks to Joe Wahed for his continued dedication and outreach efforts on behalf of our community. I would also like to thank Eli Vardi and Shawn Lichaa, who attended several of the Board meetings and provided great suggestions and support. I am pleased with the progress and active participation by our younger generation and the support from many of our out-of-state members.

Our temple is in need of maintenance and upkeep. The parking lot needs to be repaved and stripped. Our roof has been leaking and had been patched up by Marc Khedr several times, but the large glass windows at the roof level need replacement or repair. These items require a large cash outlay and your support is greatly appreciated. I would like to thank all the members for their monetary and non-monetary support. We received a donation from one member from Santa Monica to help cover part of the cost of the repaving of the parking lot. We still need your support and help with the maintenance and upkeep of our congregation and any help and support is greatly appreciated.

The community appreciates all the efforts of the following individuals: Brenda Gazzar, who assisted in editing the Bulletin while Debbie Farag was busy finalizing plans and in anticipation of her wedding (Mazel Tov to Debbie and Joe); Oreet Lichaa continues to compile, print, and distribute the Bulletin, even with her added responsibilities as a new mother to Zachary; Michael Ovadia is working diligently to put back in place the KJA website; Walter Marzouk and his committee in Los Angeles for volunteering to take over the task of maintaining the family tree from David Elichaa, who has spent over 25 years putting it together.

I would like to thank everyone and ask for your continued support of the community and your thoughts and ideas to make our community better.

Shalom,

David Ovadia  
President



## Karaite Jews Rebuild in Israel and the United States after Fleeing Egypt

by  
Rami Sabet Mangoubi

*Pioneers of Jewish diversity, followers of this tiny but centuries old branch of Judaism have succeeded in rebuilding their community in Israel and the United States after experiencing the massacres, incarcerations, and ethnic cleansing known to all Jews from Egypt and other Arab countries. In Egypt for centuries, their modern day ordeal started when the Egyptian authorities denied citizenship to nearly all Karaites and other Jews by means of legal decrees and laws that were drafted as far back as 1869, long before the start of the Middle East conflict.*

In a small street in the Daly City suburb of San Francisco, there is a Synagogue that is neither Orthodox, nor Conservative, nor Reform. It is not Reconstructionist, or even Sephardic.

"Qui nous connaît (Who knows us)?" asks an older member of the congregation in French. "Ah, Meen daryan beena (Yah, who would guess that we even exist)?" confirms another in Arabic. "What do you mean Meen daryan beena?" adds a younger voice with confidence, this time in accent free American English. "Don't you know we are the only synagogue of its kind in the *en-tire* Western Hemisphere?" These humorous conversations are commonly heard from members of this congregation that belongs to the tiny but thirteen centuries old branch of Judaism.

The founders of this Karaite synagogue, like essentially all Jewish communities in the Arab world and Iran, fled persecution in their homeland. Now American citizens, they are refugees from Egypt who have been stateless for generations before. Even though their presence in Egypt goes back centuries longer, the Egyptian government had denied citizenship to nearly all Jews by means of legal decrees and laws that were drafted as far back as 1869, long before the start of the Middle East conflict. Part of a successful immigrant story, the house of prayer is testimony to a vibrant community that has overcome the trauma of ethnic cleansing.

This success is due to the determined leadership of former inmates of Egypt's Abu Za'bal and Tura detention camps, where hundreds of Karaite and other Egyptian Jewish men were incarcerated and tortured for up to three years in the late sixties. Also among the strongest devotees are women like Regine Marzouk who, as a child in 1948, still remembers how she miraculously survived the two massacres where dozens of Jews perished in the Jewish quarter of Cairo, after losing several siblings, aunts and uncles herself.

### Karaite Judaism: A Glimpse of History

Karaite Jews believe that the Hebrew Bible, meaning the Pentateuch or Torah, the Book of Prophets, and the Prophets' writings, together contain *all* Jewish divine revelations, as received through the Hebrew prophets; the Hebrew Bible is therefore deemed sufficient for the fulfillment of the Jewish vocation that began with Abraham. Though they may consult the Talmud as a work of Jewish religious scholarship on rare occasions, Karaite Jews do not therefore recognize the divine origin of the Mishna, or the Oral tradition.

Some scholars believe that the Karaites dissented from rabbinical authorities in the eighth century under the leadership of a Rabbi, Anan ben David, and, later, a philosopher, Benjamin ben Moses El Nahawindi, to form a return to the Hebrew Bible movement, although historical evidence indicates that the movement existed as early as the fifth century.

Contrary to what some believe, the Karaites do not interpret the Torah literally. For them, all Jews have the responsibility to read the scripture on their own, and acquire their own understanding through their own efforts, or '*hippus*', rather than rely entirely on the interpretations of Rabbis. This view has at times led to pioneering and progressive thinking, and has produced ideas far ahead of their time. This is particularly true concerning the status of women, and the laws of marriage. For instance, while traditionally, mainstream rabbinical courts have not accepted a woman's testimony, Karaite religious courts have always done so. Moreover, a Karaite woman or man has always been able to request a divorce from a religious court, and does not need the spouse's consent. or, as required for centuries by mainstream rabbis.

The movement owes much of its ideas to scholar Ya'akov al Kirkisiani who lived in the ninth and tenth centuries. Al Kirkisiani was a prolific author on many subjects ranging from market economics to biology to metallurgy, as well as comparative religion. In two of his major works, *Kitab al Anwar wal Marakib*, or the Book of Lights and Lighthouses, and *Kitab al-Riyad wal Hada'iq*, or the Book of Gardens and Parks, Al Kirkisiani had a vision of Judaism that both relies entirely on the Hebrew Bible, and simultaneously embraces diversity and differences in religious practices. This follows naturally from the principle of *'hipus*, which is a founding principle of Karaite Judaism: the individual interpretation of God's revelations in the Hebrew Bible.

Karaite Judaism's avant-garde ideas, in particular, not to rely on anyone but oneself to learn the Bible, together with the strong belief that the document contains all the Jewish divine revelations, were too radical centuries ago when, in many religions, the clergy alone claimed knowledge and understanding of God's words. That perhaps explains why the movement never grew beyond some tens of thousands. Nevertheless, the Karaites later felt the need to consolidate and develop traditions. A leader in this effort was Eliyah Bachiyazi (1420-1490), who devoted his life to the monumental work *Adderei Eliyahu*, considered by historians to be an authoritative work on Karaite Judaism, perhaps the analogue to the *Chulhan Aruk* for Rabbinical Judaism. This work, though authoritative, does not relieve the faithful from the principle of *'hipus*, or the obligation of reading and acquiring a personal relationship to the Hebrew Bible.

As firm conviction and simultaneous allowance for differences do not easily go together, a difficult challenge naturally presents itself: how to strike a balance between the right to individual interpretation and analogies, or *'hipus* and *'hekech*, on the one hand; and, on the other hand, the need for consensus within the community, *kibbutz* or *'eda*, as well as the wisdom of tradition and the operating culture, *'yerukha*? Perhaps as a result of this necessary balancing act, in spite of remaining a tiny movement and experiencing over the centuries the persecution familiar to all Jews, the Karaites evolved and endured as an alternative Judaism, with its own customs and rules. Some of these rules, like those mentioned earlier concerning the status of women, can be viewed as progressive dissent from rabbinical authorities; others as attempts to simplify the practice of Judaism. Yet some practices are simply an indication of a strong desire to be assertive about the authority of the Hebrew Bible.

For instance, contrary to other branches of Rabbinical Judaism which, with the exception of the Reform movement starting two decades ago, consider a person Jewish only if the mother is Jewish, Karaites, following the practice during Biblical times, always considered a person Jewish only if their father is Jewish. Another example is the holiday of Chanukah, not considered a religious holiday because it relates to a post-Biblical event.

Karaite dietary or Kashrut laws are both simpler, and more in line with Biblical commands. For instance, based on the commandment in Exodus 23:19, 34:26, and Deuteronomy 14:21, "You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk," Karaites refrain from mixing milk and meat during a meal only if both the milk and the meat originate in the same individual mammal; the prohibition is viewed as a form of respect and compassion for the animal. The prohibition therefore does not extend to the mixing of all meat, including poultry, with dairy products.

Another noticeable example is the wearing of *Tefilin* or phylacteries, which Karaite Jews, contrary to followers of Rabbinical Judaism, or Rabbanites<sup>1</sup>, do not practice. Karaites do not interpret literally the Biblical commandment in Exodus 13:9 and Deuteronomy 6:8, "Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead"; they consider the statement a metaphoric request to always keep in my mind God and his commandments.

In spite of their small number, the Karaites contributed scholarship that proved to be of interest not only to other Jews, but also to some Enlightenment figures centuries later. For instance, the sixteenth century Karaite scholar Yitzhak ben Abraham Troki (1533-1594) wrote *Chizuk Emunah*, or Faith Strengthened, considered an eloquent defense of Judaism against common religious anti-Jewish accusations of the time. The late seventeenth century Latin translation of this work went through many editions, and was widely used by European Enlightenment figures such as Voltaire in their struggle against the Church. An English edition appeared in 1861.

<sup>1</sup> The term Rabbanite is used in the literature on Karaites to designate followers of mainstream or Rabbinical Judaism, i.e. non-Karaites

With the rise of Conservative and Reform Judaism in the nineteenth and twentieth century, new forms of Judaism appeared. Though the Karaites remained widely unknown outside the regions they inhabited, Solomon Schechter, a key figure in the American Conservative movement, traveled to Egypt in the nineteenth century and met Shabtai Mangoubi, the Chief Karaite Rabbi at the time. Fate has it that three of Shabtai Mangoubi's great-grandchildren, this writer's children, are today attending schools named after Solomon Schechter.

Apart from petty rivalries, relations between Karaite and Rabbanite Jews in Egypt, Turkey, and the Near East were, in general, cordial. The same, however, was not true for the two groups in Eastern Europe. Though both groups were victims of anti-Semitism, religious and sectarian disputes created a rift between European Karaite and Rabbanite Jews. The rift however did not prevent Rabbanites from attempting to help Karaites during the Holocaust. Perhaps because the Karaites did not recognize the divinity of the Mishnah and were as such seen as an antithesis to other Jews, the Nazis officially exempted them from the Final Solution. This policy is in part due to European Jewish scholars such as Meier Balaban and Yitzhak Schipper, of the Warsaw ghetto, who both perished in the Holocaust, and who, contrary to their own belief, claimed to the Nazis that the Karaites were not Jews so that they might help them<sup>2</sup>. It is noteworthy that in addition to the Karaites, three Rabbanite Jewish groups, the Georgian, Judeo-Tats, and the Lituani, were also officially exempted from extermination.

There were also instances where Karaites such as Ananiasz Zajackowsky and Barukh Massouda attempted to assist their fellow Jews in posing as Karaites during the war, in the hope of having them benefit from the exemption. Zajackowsky, a Turkologist, helped a Jewish couple by familiarizing them with Karaite customs. Massouda, a leader of the community in Cairo, furnished, upon request, Egyptian Rabbanite Jews or their relatives living in Europe with documents declaring that they are Karaites.

Nevertheless, as their communities and synagogues were hard to distinguish from those of other Jews, the Nazis more often than not ignored the order to spare Karaites. Martin Gilbert, Oxford's prolific European historian and Winston Churchill's official biographer, cites in his *Atlas of Jewish History* (3rd edition, Dorset Press, 1985), that about ten thousand Karaites -- probably more than half of their entire world population at the time -- were slaughtered in one or more Baby Yar type massacres in Crimea.

The result is that, following World War II, the Karaite Jews of Egypt, a small community of no more than five thousand souls, comprised the only Karaite community with a critical mass of adherents still in existence.

### Under the modern Egyptian state: Non-Citizens

Since the advent of the modern Egyptian state in the nineteenth century, no Jews, Karaite, Sephardic, and Ashkenazim, have ever been accepted by the authorities as full citizens. Historians of the Middle East often explain away this rejection as a reaction to Zionism; yet racist and anti-Semitic acts of exclusion in Egypt, as in much of the Arab world and Iran, actually predate Zionism. As far back as 1869, the authorities interpreted the Ottoman Nationality Laws in a discriminatory fashion, and passed thereafter several discriminatory decrees that, together and over time, culminated in Egypt's 1929 Nationality Law and, later, the even more notorious 1947 Company Law<sup>3</sup>.

Though the entire Jewish community numbered no more than 80,000 souls, the Nationality laws denied citizenship to more than 90 percent of the Jewish inhabitants, as well as to other minorities such as the Armenians, the Syrian Christians, and possibly the Greeks. The roots of many Jewish families in Egypt go back centuries, even prior to the *Fetouhat*, or the Arab military invasions of the Near East in the 7th Century and the subsequent colonization. Yet the Jews were declared "stateless" (*ghair mo'ayan le'l'genseyah*). This meant that they were citizens of no country, although a minority was able to obtain citizenship papers from other

<sup>2</sup> Phillip Friedman, "The Karaite under Nazi Rule," in *On the Track of Tyranny*, Max Beloff, ed., V. Mitchell, London 1960. Though Friedman describes in details the formulation of the Nazi policy and how the Nazis arrived at their conclusion, he does not discuss the policy's implementation in Crimea, where a large number of Karaites actually perished.

<sup>3</sup> Shimon Shamir, "The Evolution of the Egyptian Nationality Laws and their Application to the Jews in the Monarchy Period", Ch.2 in *The Jews of Egypt, A Mediterranean Society in Modern Times*, Shamir, S., ed., Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1987.



countries. Non-citizens were denied employment in the public sector and had to rely on private business or themselves for employment.

The Nationality Laws were closely followed by increasingly restrictive employment laws that in turn led to the Company Law in 1947, which required all but the smallest private businesses to have no more than 10% of their employees, and 25% of management, as non-Citizens. Tens of thousands of Karaites and other Jews, as well as other minorities denied citizenship, lost their jobs. The intention on the part of Egypt's authorities and bureaucrats was to see Jews and others disappear from Egypt by depriving them of their livelihood. Contrary to the common perception, it is the Company Law, and not the Arab-Zionist or Arab-Jewish conflict, that spelled the beginning of the end of the Egyptian Jewish community.

In spite of the government's efforts to continuously alienate them, excluded minorities relied on their own entrepreneurial spirit and succeeded in creating a life for themselves, as long as they were permitted to earn a living. While playing a major role in building a modern economy for Egypt, they also contributed to social and political culture. Even more important, they were able to gain the hearts and minds of many in Egypt. Two notable Karaites who lived in the first half of the twentieth century were the scholar Murad Farag and the composer Daoud Husni.

Karaites, like other Egyptian Jews, were supporters of both Egypt's independence from Britain, and of Zionism's quest for Jewish statehood, believing that the two movements' intention was to restore two ancient nations to their dignity. Karaite Poet, author, and lawyer Mourad Be'y Farag (1867-1956) wrote Arabic verses, in a Romantic style, expressing his love of Egypt. According to historian Mourad el Kodsí, in *The Karaite Jews of Egypt* (Wilprint, 1987, p.247), Farag is a contributor to Egypt's first Constitution in the 1920's. At the same time, Farag is the author of a little known but unique contribution to the defense of Zionism: the four-volume *Al Kudsiyat* (Jerusalemica), the first, and one of a few treatises written in Arabic defending the right of Jews to a State. Farag also authored religious work pertaining to interpretations of the Bible, and the difference between Karaite and Rabbinical Judaism.

Other Karaite notables include Daoud Husni (1876-1937), whose real name was David ben Elyahu Haim Levy, and whose grandchildren live in Israel today. Husni was one of Egypt's foremost composers, writing music for the country's most famous singers, including eleven songs for the legendary Omi Kolthoun, and several for Laila Mourad, herself a legend from a Sephardic family. Husni is also believed to be the first Egyptian to compose a full-length Arabic opera, *Cleopatra's Night*, based upon Husayn Sawzi's text. Though expressed with subtlety, his affinity for Zionism and praise for Jewish resistance can be detected in his Arabic Operetta *Samson and Delilah*. His contribution to Egyptian music is well respected. Ahmed Chawqi, known as Egypt's "Prince of Poets," wrote that Husni "is a precious and priceless art treasure. He is a valuable gem in Arabic music."<sup>4</sup> Mohamed Fathl, one time chairman of the Institute of Arabic Music, wrote "Daoud reserved for himself and Egypt a page of glory and honor that will last forever"<sup>5</sup>. Nevertheless, Husni was not immune from anti-Semitism. El Kodsí writes that Talaat Harb Pasha objected to Husni's leadership of Egypt's National Theater precisely because he was a Jew<sup>6</sup>.

During World War II, though the Holocaust knocked on Egypt's doors, Karaites and all of Egyptian Jewry was spared thanks to the Allied victory against the Nazis in the Battle of El Alamein, only an hour away from Alexandria. But following the war, the zeal with which the Egyptian government implemented the Nationality and Company Laws prevented most from finding employment.

The authorities also exploited the Arab-Israeli conflict to fan the flames of hatred. During the first Arab Israeli war, when Egypt and other Arab countries invaded Israel, two massacres occurred in the Jewish quarter or *Hara*, one of them in the Karaite section on June 20 around the Holiday of Shavuot (Pentecost), and the second one on September 22, around the Jewish New Year. In the two massacres, bombs were placed in a residential building killing a total of 41 Karaite and Sephardic inhabitants during their sleep, and wounding 102 others.

<sup>4</sup> El Kodsí, *The Karaite Jews of Egypt*, Wilprint, 1987, p. 259.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, P. 260.

<sup>6</sup> El Kodsí *Just for the Record* Wilprint inc. 2002 p 218

One of those wounded survivors of the massacre is Regine Marzouk, mentioned in the introduction to this article. Her memories from the ordeal are still vivid:

My sisters Elaine and Sarah and my brother Abraham did not survive. My two other brothers and my parents survived.

My mother told me that she heard her sister, my aunt, who lived in the apartment on the second floor, screaming and asking for help. A fireman went towards her and started digging, and a few minutes later, he came and told my mother that her sister had died. My mother was scared and said nothing. Later on, my mother discovered that my sister's face was covered with blood and her head was broken. The gold bracelets that my aunt wore on her arms had disappeared. My mother then concluded that the fireman killed her sister and stole her jewelry, but the whole family was too scared to say anything to the police. Only one earring was left on my aunt's body. My mother turned it into a ring, and kept it on her finger.

Everyone in the second floor was killed: my maternal aunt, her husband, my second maternal aunt, her husband, and our neighbors, and a family of guests who came to spend Shabbat and had decided to stay an extra night.

While growing up, my mother never stopped talking about my dead brothers and sisters, and her own siblings. She would always think of how old my siblings would be and what grade they would be in had they lived. She always made sure we knew when it was their birthday. Before she passed away, she sent me my aunt's ring and made me promise that I would wear it, and now I am wearing it on my left hand.<sup>7</sup>

Throughout the 1950's, the situation worsened. Later, the two coups d'état of 1952 and 1954, the unfortunate Lavon affair, and the war of 1956 brought arrests, property confiscation, deportations, and further discriminatory laws.

### The detention camps of Abu Za'abal and Tura

Those who had not left Egypt by the outbreak of the June 1967 Six Day War lived to regret their decision. On the first day of the war, the Egyptian authorities arrested nearly all Jewish males between the ages of seventeen and sixty. Those who held foreign citizenship were immediately shipped out of the country with no belongings; they were the fortunate ones. The others, between four and five hundred stateless and Egyptian citizens, were deported to the notorious detention camps of Abu Za'bal, near Cairo.

For the first three months, Jewish families did not know where the deportees were. Six months later, the Jews were transferred to the equally notorious Tura prison, where the incarceration continued for up to two or three years. In prison, many were tortured and some were sexually molested. Among the detainees were the father and siblings of Regine Marzouk who survived the 1948 massacre.

This writer, who lived during this period, recalls only too well how hostile and unsafe the atmosphere in Egypt was for the families of the detainees and their children, and how close Karaites and Rabbanites felt to each other during these dark days. At the same time, some non-Jewish families became closer to and very protective of their Jewish friends and neighbors. These strong relationships endure to this day.

Those who were stateless were released after two years and deported from Egypt. Jewish Egyptian citizens had to endure another year of incarceration before being released to be taken immediately to the airport on a flight out of Egypt. Their release was made possible thanks to the intervention of American Jewish organizations, and only on condition that they give up their citizenship and all rights in Egypt. Several of those incarcerated cannot to this day cope with their experience in Abu Za'bal and Tura. Two of this writer's acquaintances later committed suicide, while others never truly recovered.

Up to this day, the Egyptian government has not offered compensation, or even apologized for its treatment of the Jewish population.

With the reestablishment of the Jewish State, Egyptian Karaites, like all other Egyptian Jews, found in Israel a country that, for the first time in centuries, offered them passports and full citizenship. Throughout the fifties and sixties, they established themselves in cities like Ashdod, Ramla, and Beer Sheva. This popular choice of Israel was not just a necessity created by the Egyptian government's increasingly intense persecution of Jews. While steeped in Egyptian culture for centuries, members of the Karaite community, including the less well off, were multilingual and familiar with Western culture, and had therefore the option to settle in the West. Yet Karaites have historically always believed that someone who espouses Judaism or who belongs to the Jewish people is *by definition* Zionist. As far back as the tenth century, Karaite scholar Daniel al-Kumli appealed for the return to Jerusalem, and refuted the argument that Jews are to wait "until He [God] shall gather us together" (Leon Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology*. Yale, Pp. 34-39.) As such, anti-Zionism, or the rejection of a Jewish state, would be interpreted as disrespectful of Judaism. This affinity for Zion perhaps explains the high percentage of Karaites who chose Israel. The minority of Karaites who settled in the United States are highly supportive of Israel as well.

Today, the Karaites in Israel, who number about twenty-five thousand, are well integrated, prospering, and full participants in Israeli society. A Karaite engineer and former inmate in Abu Za'bal and Tura, to whom Cairo University refused to award a degree, is a winner of the Israel Prize for his engineering work. Nevertheless, though they were granted autonomy and de facto recognition on religious matters, the Karaites in Israel are still facing a recognition struggle with the Orthodox Rabbinate, a struggle not unlike that known to other non-Orthodox branches of Judaism. The Karaites feel, however, that their fight is a bit more difficult, as they do not have the same influence on Israeli politics that more affluent American Conservative and Reform Jews do.

The plight and history of the Karaites, like that of all Jews from Arab countries, remain largely unknown and totally absent from today's Middle East narrative. A leader in the attempt to correct this distortion is Karaite Joseph Abd el Wahed, a retired chief economist of Wells Fargo who shows no sign of slowing down. Abd el Wahed is a co-founder of *Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa (Jimena)*. The success of such efforts to raise awareness of the issue of Jews from Arab countries can only help the Middle East peace process. Jewish refugees from Arab countries comprise at least a third of Israel's population, or more than two million Israeli citizens, and they have long insisted that their suffering and losses have unjustly been ignored. To date, the United Nations has not passed even one resolution recognizing the suffering and plight of Jews from Arab countries, let alone made any mention of compensation, as it did for Palestinian refugees. With the recognition of their rights by the United Nations and Arab governments, along with those of the Palestinian refugees, a large constituency in Israel would commit more strongly to the Peace Process. With prominent contributors to Arabic culture like Daoud Husni and Mourad Farag as part of their heritage and history, and, simultaneously, a well known tradition of strong devotion to Zion, the Karaites are well disposed to be a trusted bridge to peace by both sides.

In the United States, the Karaite population counts no more than two thousand members with the largest concentration in the San Francisco area, where the congregation is vibrant under the highly energetic leadership of Joe Pessah and David Ovadia. As is true for any Jewish community who fled the Arab world, the wounds suffered by the Karaites during the very recent past that is still largely unknown to the outside world, including the Cairo massacres and the incarceration for years in detention camps, have formed part of the collective conscience of the congregation; and the synagogue's existence is at once a source of strength to all and the best proof that they have overcome their unwarranted and undesired fate. What will become of the congregation in a generation? Karaite Jews, who, like all Egyptian Jews, were deprived of Egyptian citizenship for centuries before their ethnic cleansing, are heartened by the fact that for the first time in their history, two countries, the United States and Israel, have embraced them warmly as full citizens; they are facing the future confident that they will continue to survive and prevail.

**Acknowledgment:** The author would like to thank his long time friend Robert Rosengard for providing insightful feedback on the content and style of this article. Mr. Jacob Cohen provided useful suggestions regarding the religious doctrine of Karaite Judaism.



# The Land of Milk and Honey

By: David Pessah, Israel

About nine months ago, I made Aliyah to Israel, the homeland for the Jewish people. I moved here because of many reasons. One is that I fell in love with one of the most beautiful and amazing women in the world. Additionally, after visiting Israel on three different occasions, I felt more and more comfortable here. The more I live in Israel, the more I feel that this is my home. I do, however, miss all my friends and family tremendously, and I think about all of you everyday. I am adjusting well here, and along with learning the language, tasting all the different Kosher foods, and celebrating the holidays. I have spent a lot of time simply immersing myself in the culture.

There are many positive aspects about living in Israel, however probably the most challenging thing for me, has been learning Hebrew. The Ulpan, or intensive Hebrew class, in which I was enrolled in Ra'anana is one of the best in all of Israel. So, that made it easier for me. What I have noticed, however, is that the more I practice speaking Hebrew, the more I forget my English! My friends also feel the same way. Studying a new language, as most of you can relate, is very challenging. Not only do they teach you how to speak the language, but they also teach you the correct pronunciations and grammar. Israelis have told me that they have not even studied some of the grammar that I am learning. My Hebrew is progressing day by day, and I think that once I learn the language, my life will become a lot easier.

The culture in Israel is just unbelievable. I have visited many different countries, and aside from the US, Israel is the only country that I have been where people from all over the world come specifically to live. On the streets you will hear people talking to each other in Hebrew, English, Russian, Spanish, French, German, Arabic and even Chinese. It truly is amazing. Although the situation is rather difficult in Israel, the Jewish people continue to celebrate life as best they can. Every holiday this past year has been so special for me since I was able to spend them with friends and family.

One of the greatest things, at least for me, is how good the food is in Israel. Every once in a while... OK about two or three times a week... I treat myself to a "shawarma" sandwich. For those who do not know what shawarma is, well, it is basically a slab of seasoned beef that is constantly cooked throughout the day. You can get the sandwich in a pita, or better yet, a "lafa," which is "burrito style." In addition to the shawarma, Israel has really tasty chicken and Bar-B-Q in restaurants. And for the vegetarians, the fruit in Israel is incredibly good, and very inexpensive. The funny thing about Israel is that there is no such thing as Israeli food. Basically, all the food that is made in Israel is from other countries. So, do not be alarmed when you come to Israel and you see Chinese, Moroccan and Italian food everywhere. The different cultures are what make Israel special.

Since the situation in Israel is rather difficult, the economy here is down. As a result, it is difficult to find work. Yet things are picking up little by little, and I think soon things will be better. Israelis have a tendency to be somewhat rude or abrupt on the outside, but truthfully, they are some of the most kind-hearted people on the inside. I have so many friends and family that have completely gone out of their way to make me feel comfortable. Once they know you, Israelis will help you find work, support you with housing and good food for the night, and all the while, treat you with respect. It really makes a difference. So, I leave you with this, come to Israel if you want to experience a wonderful culture filled with incredible holiday celebrations and great food. I promise you that you will not be disappointed. Please feel free to e-mail me before you visit at [davidpessah@hotmail.com](mailto:davidpessah@hotmail.com).

Love and Shalom,

## **Scholar Position Description Serving The Karaite Jews of America**

The Karaite Jews of America have a rich history, which dates back to the destruction of the second temple. The great majority of the Karaites in the US came from Egypt. The early arrivals came to the US about 50 years ago. Most of them fled Egypt to avoid persecution, discrimination and economic hardships. Those who left Egypt after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war did so after being released from prison or containment camps.

There are approximately 1000 Karaite Jews living in the US, concentrated within a few major urban areas, such as San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, and Boston. Today, the Karaite community wishes to retain its identity and educate its members under the leadership of a Jewish Scholar.

The Karaite community, which is headquartered in Daly City, California, is seeking a Jewish Scholar who will lead the community and create programs to teach the Tanakh and the Karaite faith and practice. The scholar will also prepare the Karaite children for their Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

We are seeking a Jewish Scholar with the following qualifications:

- Fluency in Hebrew and English (read, write & speak)
- Extensive knowledge of the Tanakh
- Strong communicator and public speaker
- Charismatic
- Ability to represent the Karaites in religious forums and lectures
- Ability to conduct research and author articles about the Karaites and their leaders
- Computer literate
- Ability to commute/drive
- Full or part time

These additional qualifications are plus:

- Fluency in Arabic
- Jewish/Karaite Historian

## Searching for a Scholar


By: Debbie Farag Ovadia, Mountain View, CA

The Board had a one-day meeting on April 25<sup>th</sup> that focused on the topic of education as a means to promoting better understanding and preservation of the Karaite faith among the adults and children of our community. Several members from the community devoted time out of their weekend to attend, including Jack Ovadia and Walter Marzouk, who flew from Texas and Los Angeles, respectively.

The major item that resulted from the meeting was the identification of the need to get a dedicated educator to lead our community in the tenets of Karaite faith and prayer. Current and past attempts at educational outreach were responsibilities that rested on the backs of a scant few volunteers. Due to time constraints, job and family responsibilities, and other conflicting priorities, these efforts are proving to be insufficient. We need a series of programs that are regular, focused, and consistent, and not just when someone is able to "get around to it." It is unfair to continue to lay the responsibility for educating and preserving our entire community on a handful of volunteers.

Not only do we need to find a way to transfer the knowledge and practices of our faith to all generations, we need to transfer the meaning and significance behind the practices. We need to be able to demonstrate the beauty and wisdom of Karaism proudly and openly, not tucked away behind the doors of the synagogue on any given Shabbat or holiday. We need to build bridges with our surrounding community and not let our fears or past experiences paralyze us from reaching out. Without making these efforts, especially with respect to making Karaism relevant in the lives of our youth today, we are at risk of losing all semblance of the Karaite identity in just a few short generations.

Please see the following description regarding the scholar/educator project. We are only in the very initial stages and welcome any input you may have. We have established a formal Search Committee, led by Gina Saddik, which will ensure that the search process is conducted in a consistent and equitable manner. Joe Abel ([jabel4200@yahoo.com](mailto:jabel4200@yahoo.com)) has been asked to serve as the community liaison, and in addition to acting as the point person for your comments and questions, he will keep you informed with respect to developments as they arise.



### Holiday Calendar for 2004-2005

Yom Teruah (Rosh Hashana)	Thursday	September	16- 2004
Erev Yom Kippur	Friday	September	24- 2004
Yom Kippur	Saturday	September	25- 2004
Sukkot	Thursday	September	30- 2004
Simchat Torah	Thursday	October	07- 2004
Fast of Gadalía (Shevit)	Sunday	October	10- 2004
Fast of 10th (Tevet)	Wednesday	December	22- 2004
Purim (First day)	Wednesday	February	23- 2005
Purim (Second day)	Thursday	February	24- 2005
Erev Passover	Saturday	April	23- 2005
Passover (First day)	Sunday	April	24- 2005
Yom Hanaphat Haomer	Sunday	April	24- 2005
Passover (Last day) Shebii Asereth	Saturday	April	30- 2005
Memorial Day (Holocaust)	Thursday	May	05- 2005
Independence Day 5765	Thursday	May	12- 2005
Shevuot	Sunday	June	12- 2005
Fast of the 9 <sup>th</sup> of Tammuz	Sunday	July	17- 2005
Fast of the 7 <sup>th</sup> of Av (Eykhá)	Sunday	August	14- 2005
Fast of the 10 <sup>th</sup> of Av (Eykhá)	Tuesday	August	17- 2005



***The opinions expressed in the following articles are solely the views of the authors and do not represent the views or endorsement of the KJA. Any comments should be directed to the authors and not the KJA or the Bulletin Editor.***

## **An Opinion Piece: Karaite Jews of America Need a New Identity to Survive**

By: Martin Mourad, Sacramento, CA

When I came to America in January 1965, the Karaite community numbered less than 100 people in the Bay Area. When we gathered, we couldn't even fill a congregation hall during an engagement or wedding ceremony. At the time, we met often and felt comfortable and close to one other in our new nation with a foreign language, customs, and habits.

One of the cultural difficulties we encountered was that we could not understand the separation of state and religion. At one wedding, the father of the bride read the traditional Ketubah, the contract between the bride and the groom to fulfill their duties in marriage, and hailed the current President and blessed him, as is customary in Egypt. After this wedding, I did not witness another reading of the Ketubah again until my own wedding in Israel. At the pre-wedding ceremony there, I promised to pay my wife in case of divorce, which, at the time, was 3,000 Israeli Lira (\$750). I tried to explain to the Karaite leaders there that in a case of divorce, my wife would be entitled half of all my belongings in California. To this, they did not care to listen any more, and there was no response. The Karaite community, it seems, will continue its traditions regardless of what is happening in the world around us.

Here in America, we are continuing to practice some of our old traditions that are derived from the Torah. Yet we have ceased to practice others, not because they are meaningless, but because our U.S. laws have expanded on the Torah and have given added protection to the individual. Our traditions and the commandments of the Torah were the foundation of today's Law, which governs us today in America. Our environment and our times have changed. Things have developed more and have gotten more complicated. We do not live in a tribal society where the man rules with impunity, and the woman is made a possession of the man. We should think beyond the primitive life we had in Egypt. I am not saying we should throw everything out of the window and adopt foreign customs, but we need changes. Like other sects of Judaism that have adapted to survive, we should also.

Some Karaites say that other Jews changed the Torah and we are the only ones still following it; thus, we are right and we are the true Jews. As an example, they mention the Karaite belief that a newborn's religion is passed down through the father and not the mother, as with the majority of Jews in America. If you think about it carefully, you will realize that the environment changed around them. Jews living in the Christian countries

were often attacked or had children with non-Jews, or in some cases, women were raped. So why penalize the innocent newborn and call him a child of sin, instead of protecting him? Is it compassionate to judge the innocent? If a male Karaite had a child by a non-Karaite woman, what would the child's religion be? Karaite, according to the Torah, you say. Yet is this logical if he was raised as a non-Jew by his mother? In cases of infidelity, the Torah implicitly mentions that we should carry out the death penalty by stoning women who had sexual relations out of wedlock. These traditions made sense during tribal times, but not in the modern world.

Aren't we a compassionate people who love and care? Aren't we tolerant of others who live around us? Let us live our lives peacefully without making comparisons between us and others. Distributing a booklet distinguishing between us and the so-called Rabbinite Jews is not the way to go. Those Jewish sects who have made changes to the Torah are the ones who came to rescue us from the ravage of the Islamic world by bringing us to the U.S.A. and encouraging us to practice our traditional religion by giving us space in their synagogues to worship. It is time for us to honor their noble help and say thank you. There is a new generation born in America. They hardly understand or follow examples of the old tradition. In addition, our situation in this country differs from that of the Karaites in Israel, yet we still rely on guidance from those in Israel.

If Karaism is to survive, we should build for our children a progressive Karaism. I asked the community to start working on reform 25 years ago, but we are still in the same place as when I came to this country 40 years ago.

## **KJA's Identity and the Struggle to Survive: Alternate Viewpoint**

By: Joe Abel, Concord, CA

I had the same experience and the challenges as Martin Mourad and many others during the transition from our old country to the new, open society of the United States. It was an overwhelming transition for many of us. In the beginning, some of us kept the traditions we practiced in Egypt because we did not know any better, or we felt comfortable with the familiarity of what we had practiced for so many years.

Yet let us not be confused between social and religious changes. The Torah is the pillar of the Jewish people in the world whether Karaite, Rabbanite, conservative, or reform. We did not cease to practice portions of the Torah because of current U.S. laws. Not only did we continue to follow the Torah's commandments, the founders of the U.S. used the Torah as the guiding principle in writing the Constitution that applies to both Jews and non-Jews, alike. If we change our foundation and heritage, we would lose our identity altogether.

We should, however, draw from the Torah's wisdom and laws in interpreting current situations and events. Our Rabbanite brothers are thriving not because they changed the Torah. They are thriving because of their dedication, commitment, sacrifices, and care for each other. They practice their religion with their children and send them to Hebrew school and Sunday school. They celebrate Shabbat and the Holy Days with family, friends, and their community. We are about 1,000 people in the whole United States; yet, we need the same type of infrastructure and organization as a community that serves many thousands.

We cannot live in isolation. We need the help and guidance and exchange of ideas between the Karaites in the U.S. and Israel. The Rabbanite communities in the U.S. keep close ties with their counterparts in Israel. They send their children to Israel to nourish their Jewish heritage and to establish a connection and belonging to the Jewish State. I agree with Martin that we should not drive a wedge between the Karaites and our Rabbanite brothers. We need to open the dialogue between the Karaite and Rabbanite communities and emphasize the commonality between us. Thanks to Debbie (Frag) Ovadia who worked very hard with sponsoring organizations, including Lehrhaus Judaica, to provide the opportunity for the Karaite community to participate in the upcoming class on comparative Judaism.

In addition to this Judaism course, we are trying to make progress with other project initiatives to support and enhance our survival as a community. We added English translations to our Shabbat prayer book and are working on



translating other books, as well. We are seeking community representatives in each region of the country to lead local projects and serve as communication links and have made excellent strides in the southern California region. We are initiating a search for a scholar/religious leader to promote, educate, and energize the KJA community. These are just a few examples of some of the things we are trying to achieve.

We rely solely on a very few dedicated volunteers to keep this community alive. We need the help and dedication of many others, who can provide constructive criticism, specific suggestions or plans to improve the Karaite community, and most importantly, ***who can volunteer their time and turn words and ideas into meaningful action.***



*The opinions expressed here are solely the views of the author and do not represent the views or endorsement of the KJA. Any comments should be directed to the author and not the KJA or the Bulletin Editor.*

#### BOTH SIDES OF THE FENCE:

A political opinion

By: Albert T. Gazzar

According to Jewish tradition, life is precious. Everything possible must be done to protect life. Therefore, one assumes that Israel has the right to defend its citizens from suicide bombers by building the "Separation Fence" or "The Terrorism Prevention Fence."

The fence has been controversial not only in other countries but in Israel as well. Some Israeli activists argue that Jewish tradition not only promotes protection of life but also values improvement of life for all human beings. The building of the fence will create an economic hardship on the Palestinians and will hinder their quality of life. However, the fence will not be a continuous wall. It will have gates to allow Palestinian workers and merchants to travel freely in and out of Israel while also permitting Palestinian farmers to reach their land.

Countries that object to the building of the fence base their objection not upon the fence itself but upon its route. Those countries favor the construction of the fence along the 1967 green line. If Israel heeds this objection, some Israeli settlements will be outside the perimeter of the fence, completely at the mercy of the Palestinian Authority and their terrorist surrogates until the debate over the Israeli settlements is resolved.

In the absence of peace between Israelis and Palestinians, it is important to remember our Jewish tradition and not forget that saving a life is more important than preserving another's quality of life.

## Ethiopian Jews Reflect Israel's Diversity, Offer Insight into Karaism

By Shawn Lichaa, Berkeley CA

Recently, I had the honor of planning a trip to Israel for Alpha Epsilon Pi, North America's Jewish fraternity. By far, the highlight of the trip was the opportunity for my 45 fraternity brothers, all of whom are white Jewish males, to interact with the Ethiopian Jewish community in Be'er Sheva, roughly an hour and a half from Jerusalem. I was unsure how well the brothers would respond to learning about a segment of Jews about whom we rarely hear.

In preparation for our visit to Be'er Sheva, therefore, we participated in a discussion with Joel Goldman, who runs a leadership development program for Ethiopian Jews before they begin Israel's compulsory military service. Mr. Goldman was a member of the Israeli Defense Forces when Israel went in and airlifted the Jews of Ethiopia to save them from potential peril as civil war began to erupt throughout Ethiopia. In the 1983 Operation Moses and the 1990 Operation Solomon and other smaller operations, roughly 60,000 Ethiopian Jews moved to Israel. Ethiopian Jews are yet another example of the mosaic of cultures which immigrated to Israel. Like the Mizrachi Jews, those who come from Arab lands, before them, Ethiopian Jews struggled to find their place amongst a predominantly Ashkenazi, or European, Jewish country.

As Mr. Goldman was retelling stories about how difficult it was for Ethiopian Jews to find validation in Israeli culture, I began to recall a lecture I once attended regarding how we can measure the social acceptance of each of Israel's diverse populations by seeing how its culture is reflected in Israeli music. This is also the case for Ethiopian Jews, as is evidenced by the increasing popularity of Hebrew reggae music within Israel. Ethiopian Jews are able to use reggae music to endorse similar themes- love, happiness, peace, freedom- to traditional reggae music performed by Bob Marley and others. That large reggae music festivals are occurring within Israel, and are started to become well-liked by non-Ethiopian Jews, is a reflection of the greater acceptance and integration of Ethiopians into Israeli society.

A smile came to my face when Mr. Goldman said, "Up until the Ethiopian Jews came to Israel, they had never heard of the Talmud." How could this be? If the Talmud was given to the Moses while the Jews wandered the desert, shouldn't all Jews have heard of the Talmud? Of course, as a Karaite, this intrigued me since we too do not believe in the Talmud. While this is not decisive proof, it certainly suggests that, as Karaites have maintained, the Talmud is not of divine origin.

There are many theories as to where the Jews of Ethiopia came from. The most prominent theory is that they had been in Ethiopia since the days of Kings Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. Accordingly, Ethiopian Jews are experts on Biblical practices from over 2,000 years ago. Up until the 1950's when some Ethiopians went

to Israel to study and brought back Rabbinic customs, the Ethiopian community never wore t'fillen (phylacteries) or had mezuzot. Another theory, although unlikely, is that the Jews of Ethiopia were actually influenced by the Karaites of Egypt and North Africa, which might explain why they had no Talmudic tradition. This theory, however, does not explain many of the customs of Ethiopian Jewry that would have predated such an interaction with Karaites.

Karaites and Ethiopian Jews share other features that separate their practices from those of the Rabbinate. First, both Karaites and Ethiopians had their own, unique, methods of ritually slaughtering an animal for the purposes of making it kosher. Similarly, each method has been deemed un-kosher by the Chief Rabbis in Israel, and thus Karaites and Ethiopians are not allowed to open stores, which slaughter meats according to their religious customs. Ethiopian Jews, much like the Karaites of Egypt, also strictly followed the laws of *nidah*, or ritual purity. Today, as is the case with all minorities lacking proper educational institutions, the Ethiopian community is rapidly adopting the customs of the majority population, such as a dependency on the Talmud and other Rabbinic traditions. This has even caused hostility between the Ethiopians who were the traditional communal leaders in Ethiopia and those who studied at yeshivas in Israel to become "Rabbis."

The day after Mr. Goldman's presentation, we headed to Be'er Sheva to meet the Ethiopian community at their community center. Within thirty seconds, my concerns that my brothers would not be receptive to engaging the Ethiopian Jewish community were allayed. At the center, we painted the fence surrounding the premises and tutored Ethiopian children as they returned from classes. My fraternity brothers had an amazing time learning first hand about the Ethiopian community. So much so, that some fraternity members are volunteering to return to the community center this summer to help teach English to the Ethiopian children.

My experiences in Israel, especially my interactions with the Ethiopian community, have further fueled my passion for Israel. I witnessed first hand the weaving together of cultures and the struggles of an immigrant population trying to hold on to its beliefs. The fact that the Ethiopian community had Karaite tendencies has additionally piqued my curiosity about other groups that have similar foundations. I have watched the Ethiopians rejoice over living in the homeland for the Jews, and heard the anguish in their voices that their customs and traditions will soon be completely lost.

As for Karaites in the United States, and even throughout the world, we face a similar challenge. The example of the Ethiopian Jewish community reiterates the necessity for us to establish institutions for learning and growth so that we can thrive with our beliefs as our foundation. Without such institutions, we will first forget why we are Karaites. Soon after, we will forget that we are Karaites.

## Eulogy for Aziza El Sergani

By: Joe D. Moussa

*In keeping with tradition, the author visited his grandmother's grave with his family approximately a year after her burial to acknowledge the placement of her tombstone. The author had given the following eulogy in her honor during the funeral in the previous year. The Editors of the Bulletin regret that the delay in publication caused this anniversary tribute to be delayed.*

My grandmother Nuna came to this country widowed at the age of 58 with both my parents and two sisters. Coming to a new country at this age was not easy, but Nuna quickly picked up the English language. She would always ask me if her spoken English was good and if I understood her. She was very proud of speaking English correctly.

Nuna took care of my sisters and me when we were young. Both my parents worked, and my grandmother was home raising us. I shared a room with my grandmother until I had a room of my own. As we grew older and more independent, Nuna would live at my Aunt Mary's house as well my parent's home, switching back and forth. At first, the Jewish Home for the Aged would pick up Nuna in the morning and return her in the afternoon several days a week for activity. She would spend her days there involved in activity and socializing especially, with Marcelle Ezial. Due to Nuna's inability to walk and tend to her own needs, building A-3, room 372 became her dwelling at the Jewish Home for the Aged for approximately the past ten years.

The transition to the home was not easy for Nuna, nor was it easy for our family. It was a hard decision to make, but Nuna eventually made it her home and enjoyed the activities there. Each day at 11am, the Activities Director, Jenovi, would come and take her to the activity room. She always looked forward to 11 a.m., and if Jenovi was late, you could bet Nuna would give her a piece of her mind!

As the years passed, Nuna's hearing and eyesight diminished. It became more and more difficult to communicate with her. Being in a wheel chair with almost no hearing and very little eyesight did not affect Nuna's strong will for life. She loved life and was a happy person. You cannot believe the joy on her face when we would come to see her. She had so much love to give without needing or wanting a thing. She would take my hand and kiss it a thousand times and hug me. This was her escape. "If only it could last forever..." I am sure this thought was going through her mind.

I surely did not take after Nuna when it came to remembering specific events and dates. Age was not a factor for Nuna's ability to remember practically everything. Her mind was so sharp that I would have to be reminded of things. She was as vibrant as any young adult, only stranded by her lack of mobility, poor eyesight, and loss of hearing.

When I would visit Nuna, she would roll her wheel chair to the cabinet and pull out a Kit Kat. This was her favorite chocolate bar. If I didn't take it, a banana would follow. Even with what little she had, she always offered me something.



She would tell me stories of how I locked her out of the house when I was young, or about the time when I threw clothes out the 2<sup>nd</sup> story window. Remembering little, silly moments like those brought a lot of joy and laughter to her.

Nuna survived 12 days without food and with little water. She had a strong will to live, but knew her time had come. She felt our presence and many times held out her arm and hugged us.

On March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2003 at 11:15 a.m., Aziza El Sergani, Sister, Mother, Grandmother and Great Grandmother left this earth. I consider this day as a blessing, as this is my parent's wedding anniversary and my birthday. I will always remember this day as a day to cherish the good memories of my grandmother.



### **Bay Area to Participate in Comparative Judaism Course**

Temple B'nai Israel, home to the Bay Area's Karaite community will be one of eleven congregations participating in a comparative Judaism course that will give attendees a glimpse into the depth and breadth of Jewish ideology and practice. Participating congregations run the gamut from Orthodox to Reconstructionist. The course will be hosted at a different location each week on Tuesdays for a two hour session led by the congregation's designated representatives. This will be followed by an invitation to attend Shabbat services on the following Saturday.

Temple B'nai Israel will be sponsoring the session on January 18, 2005, and we would like everyone to **please make every effort to attend the Shabbat service on January 22<sup>nd</sup>**. We want to have a strong showing of support from everyone in the community.

The course runs every Tuesday 7:30-9:30 pm from October 26-December 14, 2004 and then resumes January 11-25, 2005. The cost of the entire series is \$25. For more information call Bobbi at 650-852-3505 or [bbornstein@newbridges.org](mailto:bbornstein@newbridges.org). The course is being sponsored by the following organizations: The Albert L. Schultz Jewish Community Center, Lehrhaus Judaica: The Adult School for Jewish Studies, and New Bridges to Jewish Community.

## Announcements...Life Passages

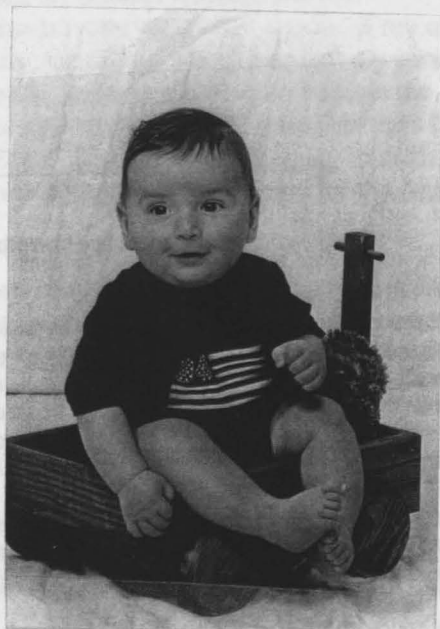
### Births...Mazel Tov to...

- Habib & Stephanie Lichaa on the birth of their son, Maurice Lichaa, born October 3, 2003
- Allan and Heidi Ezial on the birth of their Daughter, Marcelle Olivia Ezial, born June 10, 2004.
- Oreett and Daniel Lichaa on the Birth of their son, Zachary Joseph Lichaa, born January 6, 2004
- Morris and Shulamit Bendah on the birth of their son, Jonathan Joseph Bendah, born June 29, 2004
- Raymond and Melanie Haroun on the birth of their son, Jacob Seth Haroun, born August 6, 2004



### Bar Mitzvahs...Mazel Tov to...

- Joshua David Saleh, son of Simone and the late Albert Saleh, on his Bar Mitzvah November 29, 2003
- Zachary Darwish, son of David and Shirley Darwish, on his Bar Mitzvah April 17, 2004
- Marc Jacob Pessah, son of Maurice and Liliane Pessah, on his Bar Mitzvah April 24, 2004
- Benjamin Pessah, son Henri & Kim Pessah of Burlingame, CA on his Bar Mitzvah May 2004.



### Graduations...Mazel Tov to...

- Nora Massuda, who graduated from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo with a degree in graphic communications
- Avi Moussa, who graduated from UC Berkeley with a degree in chemistry
- Michael Ovadia, who graduated from California State Chico.
- Michelle Ovadia, who graduated from UC Davis with a triple major in psychology, music, and theater

## Weddings...Mazel Tov to...

- Debbie Farag, daughter of Albert and Susie Farag, and Joe Ovadia, son of Alan and Feryal Ovadia on their wedding, March 21, 2004
- Lilly Lichaa, daughter of Fred and Jacqueline Lichaa, and Mark Adamson on their wedding, July 1, 2004
- Michael Marzouk, son of Walter and Joyce Marzouk, and Rachel Kaplan, on their wedding August 1, 2004



## Condolences...

We express our heartfelt condolences on the loss of Farag El Kodsi (Deerfield Beach, FL), beloved husband of Marcelle El Kodsi and brother of Mourad El Kodsi, on August 19, 2004. May he rest in everlasting peace.

## Update from Southern California Region

In addition to leading prayer services in the southern California region over the past twenty years, Roger Lisha (Van Nuys, CA) has taken on the added role of ritual leader and advisor. The community appreciates all of his efforts to date and looks forward to receiving his additional support and guidance. For the first time in July, prayer services were held at the home of Alan and Feryal Ovadia with the Torah that had been brought out of Egypt by the late Joseph Ovadia.

## Calling All Members...

The Board is still seeking interested individuals from other areas across the U.S. to serve as local representatives, points of contact for information dissemination, and leaders for special projects. Please contact any Board member if you are interested in serving in any of these capacities. The more broadly we can build a base of individuals, the more successful we will be in our outreach efforts. We need your help!

## KJA Directory Update...

Michael Ovadia is spearheading a new campaign to compile our members' information electronically for easy sorting and dissemination of information. We are still encumbered with outdated paper directories, and fast, efficient communications are simply not possible. E-mail addresses are key, so please, at a minimum enter your name and e-mail address into the system. This information will be kept confidential and will only be utilized as an electronic phonebook amongst the KJA community.

To access the database, go to [www.karaites.org/database](http://www.karaites.org/database). Click on the "Enter the database" link. You will be prompted for a password, which is [kja1575](#). There is the capability of searching the database and adding your own information. For any questions pertaining to the database, please contact Michael at [mike@squiggysays.com](mailto:mike@squiggysays.com).





*David Ovadia*